



DISASTERS, PANDEMICS, PUBLIC LIFE AND CONSUMERIST CULTURE- A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE RELEVANCE OF MARXIST PHILOSOPHY

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Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: May 22nd 2021 Accepted: June 6th 2021 Published: July 8th 2021</p>	<p>The crisis of civilization can take many forms; epidemic is one of the forms. The recent corona outbreak that we are experiencing may have arisen to us as a curse of nature. Peoples are looking for salvation. We don't know what to expect next. May be the problem will be solved but the world is helpless today. We are witnessing huge deaths every day. The rate of infection and death is increasing all over the world. People's social, economic and political life is almost shattered. Today people are being forced to abide by various rules related to lock down. There have been recent public protests in Britain and United States. This attitude of the people of the developed world may gradually spread to other countries. But it was not desirable, but the compulsion to do so was hidden in capitalist consumerism. Today consumerism has changed the character of class relations. The relationship between buyers and sellers is dominating today, not about the capitalists and the proletariat, but about the class. Therefore the suffix of Marxist philosophy must be used in the context of the epidemic in public life, if we want to get a society and state without capitalist consumerism!</p>
<p>Keywords: Covid-19, Karl Marx, Sustainable Development, Capitalism, Consumerism.</p>	

INTRODUCTION

Disaster or an epidemic is the ultimate result of consumerism. This is now almost universally recognized. And consumerism is the result of capitalism-a fact that most of the people will one day admit it without any controversy. Disaster or an epidemic is not only by natural phenomenon, it can also caused by humans. Human beings do not have a direct hand in natural disasters, but they have an indirect involvement. If even the indirect hand of man is not proved then it can get the label of pure natural disaster. Floods, droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, etc. and the arrival of various infectious diseases to bring disaster to human society is able and it doesn't hesitate to start an epidemic. In fact all type of disasters damage and disrupt public life. Normal living becomes miserable for humans and others animal. According to Marxist philosophy, both the 'foundation' and the 'superstructure' stave off by any epidemic or catastrophic disaster. According to Marxism, the foundation of a society or any political system is its economy and politics, education, health, arts, science, technology, literature, culture etc. formed superstructure. When the effects of the epidemic are long lasting, the economy of the so-called developed states also collapses; the economic woes of other underdeveloped countries are deplorable and unimaginable. Needless to say, all the parts of the superstructure and issues stand on the economic foundation of the society or the state. As a result, as the economic downturn worsened, parts or subjects of the superstructure began to crumble like a house of cards, there is an unprecedented tension between the environment and human society as a whole, and the effect of this tug-of-war fell on the masses. Then debate, confusion, uncertainty and problems of co-existence begin.

Today's human civilization has become an accustomed to consumerism, knowing or not, its evils. Ignorance and awareness are both relevant for such excuse. If the driving forces of the state and the world order work to spread consumerist philosophy and propagate consumerism, then non-driving force of the state or world order, that is the powerless common man, has no power to resist it. Rather, man begins to follow the way shown by his driving force and is forced to accept disaster as well. Today's capitalist consumerism is entirely responsible for all the problems related to environmental catastrophe. The work that consumerism does well is, to increase the distance between the environment and people. People and environment complement each other; they are not opposed in any way. The existence of one depends on the others. But consumerism is hurting the relationship between man and the environment as a whole. This injury is being inflicted unilaterally by human beings, but its consequences are not only to be suffered by human beings, but also by other living beings and animals. It is consumerism that hurts people and hurts themselves and others. The consequences are fatal and it is by the capitalist civilization. When a catastrophe takes the form of an epidemic, the consequences are devastating for animals, especially humans; e.g. -

- Unavoidable death.
- Economic disaster.
- Disruption of public health system.
- Collapse of normal education system.
- So many obstructions in the cultural world.
- Atmosphere of untouchability.
- The rise of domestic violence is expanding and accelerating the scope of social violence.
- Political problems and corruption.
- Administrative weakness and indecision.
- The plight of the working class.
- Emergency orders, directives, rules, enforcement and compliance with the law and order.
- Confusion in the atmosphere of awareness and unconsciousness; etc. The greatest evil of any epidemic is the unavoidable death and mortality increases day by day.

The science of the consumerist society can't prevent it easily and business related science doesn't want to prevent it. 'Capitalist trade' predominates over pharmaceuticals. The struggle for existence spreads among the scientific business organizations, the effect of which is that people forget the struggle for cooperation. This capitalist domination all over the world can't even show the way of salvation to the masses rather spread the confusion and create a false sense of awareness among the people and wants to maintain the atmosphere of 'terror' in a subtle way. Marxist alternative consciousness is always relevant to break this consumerist or capitalist misconception. But consumerism is attracting people so much that they have almost forgotten the Marxist worldview. Of course, behind this there is a huge conspiracy of capitalist-consumerism. There is no doubt that, Marxism is a worldview, but man's unwelcome attraction to capitalist consumerism is narrowing the world of Marxist thought. To prevent this conspiracy man can't use his knowledge and intellect; ultimately prevent the capitalist power from forming a future government they have to be conscious. Marxist rationalism is capable of protecting man and his environment no doubt. Marxist rationalism follows the principle of 'dialectical materialism'. According to Maurice Conforth, "dialectical materialism is a scientific world outlook. Its scientific character is manifested especially in that it turns socialism into a science and by developing the science of society, shows how the whole of science can be developed into the service of mankind."¹ Now the question that may come to the minds of many is- Where did covid-19 come from? How did it spread across the world? Why? The answer of both questions is obviously China. PRC is active in trying to create another alternative capitalist suffix of western capitalist power. Market economy, free trade, neo-liberalization and globalization have radically changed the Marxist consciousness of today's China. As a result, there is no doubt that modern China is a victim of consumerism. Marxism believed that consumerism is absolutely capitalist culture. Engels wrote: "...animals use only the external nature and bring about change in nature only by their own presence; but man by his change, puts nature in pursuit of its purpose, dominates nature. This is the ultimate and fundamental difference between human beings and other animals...we shouldn't get too much complacency in this victory of human beings over nature, because for every such victory, nature takes revenge on us"² But the question is what is consumerism? What is the relationship of capitalism with it? Consumerism is a type of social and economic hierarchy in which people are encouraged to acquire a growing number of products and services.³ Consumerism is defined in economics as an economic policy, with a special emphasis on consumption. Abstractly, the power of free choice of the consumers will tell producers what should be produced and what shouldn't.⁴ That is, consumerism doesn't mean a person's voice, but a money; a voice.⁵ Capitalism refers to an economic system in which the market economy has the control of private ownership over trade, factories and means of production in order to make profit.⁶ Capitalism builds product-relations; that's why the importance of buyer and seller interaction is very much important. This relationship began to dominate all aspects of human life. In addition, capitalism emphasizes the accumulation of capital, the competitive market and exploitation of labor. So, it shouldn't be a problem for us to understand that how consumerism and capitalism are related. Both are two sides of the same coin. The catastrophic result of the combination of the two is obviously a disaster; whether it is in the form of epidemics or due to natural disaster. That is to say, the death of man is accelerated by consumerist capitalism. There is no doubt about it. The direct effect of any epidemic falls on the economy of the society. All kinds of political systems, try to prevent it by providing some attractive services. As a result per capita income of the people began to decline. The inevitable result is the ultimate financial catastrophe in the life of the nation. Many people have to live on hunger and malnutrition. On the other hand, the people of the world are ultimately disappointed with the bitter experience of the covid-19. Public health is being neglected in order to bring lock down and its subsequent financial mobilization. Disaster has also hit the public health system. It is noted that, disorders in the public medical system and economic exploitation of patients and his family in the private medical sector is a very common incident. Then it must be said that people are still victims of the 'economy of plunder'.

It has already been stated that, according to Marxist philosophy, economy is the foundation of the society, on which other systems, such as education, health, art, culture and politics- formed superstructure of the society. If the epidemic breaks down the country's economy, the superstructure will also collapse. Any epidemic manifests itself in a state of misery. Covid-19 is no exception. Normal public life is overwhelmed by the infectious virus. Basic human rights are also being forced to accept it for the sake of preventing infection. Social distance rules and digital platforms have been introduced, but the traditional teaching-learning process has become obsolete. This alternative system can

never be the best alternative to conventional classroom learning process. Besides, socio-cultural crisis is being created. The climate of mistrust, looking at each other with suspicion, hatred towards the infected patient or his family-is introduced a new social relationship. In fact, any epidemic creates an unusual kind of tension in the society, within which social class relations remain active; sometime it is obvious, sometime hidden. But the epidemic does not see the class. At the same time, there is a terrible atmosphere of awareness and unawareness about the severity of the disease, which makes people nervous. At present, the international organization WHO is silent spectators and confused us in regular basis. Last, and behind all this, there is a terrible game of implementing neo-capitalist project. The game that, some advanced nations of the world are currently mastering, at the cost of harming their own human resources, as well as in return for that loss.

It is impossible to evaluate Marxist philosophy by ignoring the conflicting relationship, that exists between nature and society. The greatest repercussion of capitalism is the attempt to separate nature and society. In most cases, the bonds and coexistence that develops between human and nature through the system of production that operates in the pursuit of survival by exploiting man, nature or the environment have the potential to withstand any epidemic. But the internal conflict of capitalist consumption leads to the destruction of the whole human society by destroying nature. Lenin wrote about the oppression of capitalism-⁷ In every class, in the inner advanced country, in the most advanced class, even in that special moment, when their spiritual strength reaches an unprecedented high level, there is a group of people in the class who do not think, can't think. As long as the classed society is firmly established and integrated, as long as it is itself. It is bound to be so long as it is can't create a foundation. If it were not for that, the oppression that capitalism inflicts on the masses would not be possible.⁷ If, capitalism exists, social relations will not change and the divisions between nature and man will be able to maintain stability forever. But it is not necessary to stop capitalism by destroying it, but to prevent its development by creating natural obstacles from the environment so that no new shoots develop. Needless to say, it is not possible without a radical and intellectual change in the society and the political system. And it is here that Marxist philosophy becomes increasingly relevant; which is an alternative society of consumerism, stable healthy society is able to give us gifts.

In fact, capitalism and aristocracy are closely related to each other, as evidenced by history. The 'Great Plague' killed the most of the population in England. There are examples of such epidemics in history. But the bigger question is what exactly is the role of the capitalist democratic state, in dealing with the pandemics ? The answer is that both disease and medicine are caused by capitalism. Given the amount of money being spent on cancer treatment today and the way the disease is progressing, it can be said that this disease has the potential to kill more than the current pandemic. But it is also doing business with the medicine of global capitalism. Capitalist democratic state and government is completely silent. Under the guise of public welfare, such states are busy to promoting the new philosophy of capitalism and neo-liberalism. Even none of the socialist states in the world have properly applied Marxist philosophy. As a result, traditional Marxist philosophy has become synonymous with authoritarianism. This is a great failure of understanding Marxist philosophy. Capitalism has been nurtured by this failure. And behind this there is a larger conspiracy of capitalism. So, what is absolutely needed a revolutionary consciousness. Lenin rightly said that "no revolutionary movement is possible without revolutionary doctrine."⁸ He added: "this is the basic principle of revolution that all revolutions, especially the Russian revolution of the 20th century, have upheld; not only is this enough for the revolution, the exploited masses are demanding change, realizing that it is impossible to live in old state; for the revolution to be successful, it is necessary that the exploiting class can no longer live as before. The revolution wins only when the lower classes no longer want the old days, and when the upper classes can no longer follow the old ways."⁹ But the question is that the narrowness of knowledge, the addiction to consumerism and the blind devotion to capitalism are working hard at the present time as the main obstacle to the revival of revolutionary consciousness among the masses. Karl Marx said: "man exists so that history shall exist, and history exists so that truth can be revealed...man and history exists so that truth can become conscious of itself. History thus, becomes, like truth, a separate entity, a metaphysical subject of which the real human individuals are only mere representatives."¹⁰

CONCLUSION

When consumerism reaches its peak of popularity, most people are attracted to an ideology that has been created by ignoring or violating the conditions of sustainable development; the ideology that makes people more mechanical and lazy, forgets the dignity of working class and the bourgeoisie's able to get the benefit of excessive tax exemption from the state and the government and climb the hill of profit and lead the citizens to consumerism. However, the name of this doctrine can't be synonymous with humanism. This is why Marxist philosophy has established itself as an alternative consciousness, against the consumerist consciousness. Finally, it must be remembered that the future of all nations can be successfully only on the way of socialism.¹¹ Consistently, the development of the intellect is the only way out of the consumerism. There seems to be no other option to fix the direction of the directionless people. Real progress can only come through human bonds, and real human bonds do not come unless they are steadfast in the right ideology. The social distance regarding 'corona' is temporary but the distance from one's own intellect and knowledge is capable of giving rise to unimaginable long term pandemic. Cautious people are not optimistic, they are realistic, because they always keep in mind that, "the movement is everything, the ultimate aim is nothing."¹² It is so natural, capitalist society, will be patron of consumerism, according to Marxist thinker Pulantjas, "as the capitalist society reflects the class struggle as it is included in the superstructure, so the capitalist class relationship develops and maintains the stability of the capitalist society."¹³ Further, "the

capitalist state maintains relative autonomy for its structural features, the influence of which determines the social position of the participants in the state apparatus; the character of the state is not determined by the social status of the participants in the state system.”¹⁴ With this in mind, we must rationalize our convictions about rebuilding the relevance of Marxist philosophy and dedicate ourselves to the cause of building a future society without consumerism and engaging in a peaceful non-violent movement for a healthy world. Only then we will get a beautiful society, almost free from pandemics, a healthy world; whose life force will always be full and active in the life force of every human being in the world.

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